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SUBJECT: Ambassador Applauds Staff Retention Efforts at Dell Call Center and Creative Thinking at SM Mall of Asia

¶1. SUMMARY: On November 8, the Ambassador visited the Dell Philippines Call Center in Pasay City, Metro Manila to assess developments in the booming contact center business. The visit was followed by a tour of the country's largest retail establishment, the SM Mall of Asia, including the newly launched SM Science Discovery Center and the SMX Convention Center. The visit provided an interesting behind-the-scenes glimpse into a major US company's Philippine operations, and gave the Embassy another opportunity to strengthen our relationship with one of the Philippines' most successful and forward-thinking companies, which relies on U.S. technology and business support. END SUMMARY.

Dell Contact Center

¶2. Dell has invested \$150 million in the Philippines to support customer service operations at its two call center facilities. Country Manager Mike Garrison said that Dell is "extremely bullish" on the Philippines. According to him, the greatest challenges to the call center industry in the Philippines are turnover of employees and English skills, but Dell Philippines has half the turnover of its competitors in the local call center industry, which Garrison attributes to the "culture" within the company. Dell Philippines prioritizes employee support in areas such as training, preferential scheduling tied to performance, and ease of intra-company transfers.

¶3. The Ambassador was asked to participate in Dell Philippine's "Profiles in Leadership" series, providing tips on management and leadership to local senior management. The Ambassador shared her personal rules for success and responded to questions on managing conflicts, motivating co-workers and subordinates, and determining the most important values for a true leader. Country Manager Garrison said this leadership session was the best they've had to date.

SM Science Discovery Center

¶4. SM Investments Vice Chairman Tessie Sy-Coson, who is listed among Fortune Magazine's 50 most powerful women in international business, led the Ambassador through the Mall of Asia, pointing out its reliance on U.S. technology and business. The new \$7 million SM Science Discovery Center has many unique features, including a planetarium with a three-dimensional display, flight simulators, and remote controlled robots. The Center opened on 19 October, 2007 and is the first of its kind in the Philippines. The center's designer is California-based Leisure Entertainment Consultancy, designers of Legoland, two Universal Studios, and Disney's California Adventure, and has already become a favorite field trip destination for area schoolchildren.

SMX Convention Center

¶5. SMX Convention Center, which opened on November 5, is the Philippines' largest privately-run exhibition and convention center with capacity for 6,000 people. There are open exhibition areas, multi-functional halls, and flexible meeting rooms with modern exposition amenities for major conference and trade exhibits. The Ambassador noted the attention to detail at the facilities and the possibilities for using them as venues for future Embassy events. The introduction of a major new convention and exhibition center has already attracted attention in the business community, with bookings of major trade shows and events already full for the first three months of operation.

Progress toward a positive economic future

¶6. SM Investments Corporation is undertaking development efforts to build the "Mall of Asia Complex". The current expansion is just part of the effort to create a 60 hectare mixed-use development that will integrate technologically advanced infrastructure with office, retail, hotel, institutional, residential and leisure components. The firm envisions the complex as the country's premier business and tourism district, a glimpse of the Philippines' potential given adequate infrastructure, investment and education. Dell Philippines' success at this location is an example of this potential.

Kenney